

SWEET BRIAR COLLEGE



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*Learning
by
ear*

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Bulletin of Sweet Briar College



Learning by ear . . .

is ideal for acquiring facility in understanding a new language; listening and practising, over and over, is the surest way to gain confidence in speaking it.

At Sweet Briar College, a new language laboratory with the latest in electronic equipment provides a modern answer to the problem of learning a language and simplifies the process for beginning students.

in the laboratory . . .

Each cubicle, lined with acoustic tile, is outfitted with a magnetic disc recorder, with earphones and a microphone, and each is connected with the master record and tape players.

During the two hours spent in the laboratory every week, the beginner listens to a master tape or record. She repeats the words and phrases, recording them on a small plastic disc. When it is played back, she hears her own mistakes, and by continued repetition learns to improve her pronunciation. At the same time, her comprehension of the language grows. Except for a few semi-permanent records made at intervals, these practice discs made in the privacy of the recording cubicle are erased at the end of

the laboratory hour. For those students who want additional practice, the laboratory is open two evenings a week.

Master records and tapes used for elementary language classes in the laboratory are based on material in the textbook; they are made by native linguists on the staff at Sweet Briar.

and in class . . .

Having become accustomed to the repeated sound of her own voice speaking a new language in the laboratory, the student soon overcomes her timidity in the classroom. Here, three times a week, the teacher can guide and at the same time evaluate her progress.

With increasing self-confidence, students begin to use words and idiomatic phrases with a degree of ease usually not experienced except after long exposure to older methods of classroom instruction. Encouraged by such progress, they find new pleasure in learning. Teachers observe remarkable improvement in the results, in comparison with those obtained under former procedures.

Occasionally the supervisor listens to a practice disc.



In conversation courses, one hour a week is spent in the laboratory. Freedom for experimentation in teaching methods is possible here. Original dialogues introduce students to different situations found in everyday conversations and accustom them to hearing men and women speak with variations in accent. Sometimes related slides or films, which provide visual accompaniment to the dialogues, are used in conjunction with the master tapes.

Student assistants supervise laboratory periods . . .

Upperclass students, chosen for their superior linguistic ability, their reliability, an interest in teaching, and a certain mechanical aptitude, serve as supervisors. They operate the master tape and record players, they instruct students in the use of the equipment, and they give linguistic information and advice. Supervisors find that their work is good preparation for language teaching, and they develop poise and ingenuity in meeting problems as they arise in the laboratory. Their suggestions are often helpful to the classroom teacher, as they discuss problems of teaching and learning.

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Sweet Briar's language laboratory, which was opened in September 1956, was made possible through a grant from the Fund for the Advancement of Education, as an experiment in its Program for Utilization of College Teaching Resources. Equipment was carefully selected for fidelity of sound reproduction and for general dependability.

Teachers have found that, within a few months, students' rate of learning has been greatly accelerated. It has also been shown that qualified undergraduates can conduct language laboratory instruction satisfactorily, thus giving the teaching staff more time for teaching and related duties.

In its first year, the experiment is being conducted in two courses, elementary French and elementary French conversation. To some extent, however, the laboratory is also used in other language courses, in German, Italian, and Spanish.

Sweet Briar offers major programs in French, Spanish, and in Modern Languages, with concentration in French, German, Italian, or Spanish. Qualified students may enroll in the Junior Year in France, which has been administered by Sweet Briar since 1948, or in some other recognized program for the junior year in Spain, Italy, Switzerland, or Germany.

Language, which is "the living expression of the mind and spirit of a people," has been recognized as indispensable to the liberal arts education. In today's closely inter-related world, language has become even more important than in the past, in conducting affairs of government, industry, and business. Personal enrichment results from acquaintance with other languages and the people who speak them and, in addition, language facility is a useful tool, a requisite for a wide variety of occupations.

Student supervisor confers with instructor.



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LEARNING BY EAR

Miss H. Tyler Gemmell
Sweet Briar, Virginia

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